

(VA) fiduciary program. When a veteran has difficulty managing his own finances, the VA appoints a guardian or a "fiduciary" to oversee his benefits. During the hearing, I was surprised to learn that there is no mechanism in place to provide replacement of benefits for VA beneficiaries whose benefits have been misused by a VA recognized fiduciary.

Unfortunately, some of our veterans have lost out on their VA benefits because of fiduciary misuse. According to an investigation by the Inspector General, one woman embezzled over \$60,000 in VA payments from 1997 to 2001 from a disabled veteran under her care. In another case, a fiduciary defrauded his uncle out of nearly \$55,000 in VA payments.

A good number of our veterans must live on limited budgets and rely primarily on their VA payments. When they lose even a portion of their benefits, the impact on the quality of their lives can be significant.

I was also surprised to learn that Congress has not improved on the safeguards for veterans who depend on fiduciaries in over 25 years. It is time we do something to prevent fraud against our veterans and to provide remedies when benefits are misused.

Today, I am introducing legislation, the "Veterans Fiduciary Act of 2004," which would provide veterans and their families new protections and new avenues to recoup their losses. This bill would require the replacement of benefits in cases when the VA has been negligent in failing to investigate or monitor a fiduciary and in certain other circumstances. It will also require the VA to conduct background checks before recognizing a fiduciary and will give the VA new mechanisms to deter misuse, including civil monetary fines.

Again, I strongly believe we should be doing more to protect the VA benefits our veterans rely upon. I am proud to introduce legislation to give our most vulnerable veterans the protection they deserve.

TRIBUTE TO YEOMAN SECOND CLASS MONTELL L. GWINN

HON. C. W. BILL YOUNG

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 2004

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and pay tribute to an outstanding enlisted sailor, Yeoman Second Class, Montell L. Gwinn, as he prepares to complete his service to our Nation in the United States Navy. It is a great honor for me to take this opportunity to thank YN2 Gwinn and his family for his 7 years of distinguished and dedicated service to our Nation for which he has proudly and selflessly served in the defense of freedom.

I came to know this sailor while he was assigned to the Navy's Appropriations Liaison Office. In this capacity, he served as a liaison for me, for the members of my staff, and for the professional staff of the Appropriations Committee I chair to the Secretary of the Navy and the Chief of Naval Operations. He also accompanied me on several trips as I investigated the health and welfare of our troops stationed here and throughout the world. In all cases, YN2 Gwinn performed his duties in the most professional manner. He was particularly invaluable in providing great personal insight

as an enlisted sailor, giving tremendous input on issues affecting the sailors and their families. His candor, intelligence, and steadfast devotion to duty, was a tremendous asset to me in my deliberations regarding our most prized commodity within our Armed Forces, the men and women of our all-volunteer force.

Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to recognize YN2 Gwinn for his distinguished service to our Nation. Montell is symbolic of the spirit of our Nation's all volunteer force. My wife Beverly and I have the highest respect for him and all those who serve in uniform in defense of freedom. Without their dedicated service, we would not be "the land of the free" were we not also the "home of the brave." My colleagues and I want to express our thanks and appreciation for the special contribution YN2 Gwinn has made to the United States Navy and the special insight he has provided me and the members of my Committee. We also wish Montell and his family continued success and the traditional naval wish of "fair winds and following seas" as he closes out his distinguished military career.

RELATING TO THE LIBERATION OF THE IRAQI PEOPLE AND THE VALIANT SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES AND COALITION FORCES

SPEECH OF

HON. DIANA DeGETTE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Ms. DeGETTE. Mr. Speaker, war does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity or religion—it is indifferent to background or boundaries, social standing or political affiliation. War impacts all of those involved with an impartial voracity. Honoring our men and women for the sacrifice, strength and courage they have demonstrated while in Iraq should be as unbiased—it should not be mired in partisanship or petty politics.

With a unified voice, the House of Representatives should approve a resolution that acknowledges the bravery of the American men and women in Iraq and the sacrifices they and their families have made for the sake of our nation. It should recognize the 575 American soldiers who have lost their lives in Iraq, soldiers who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country, as well as the more than 3,000 wounded troops who are struggling to recover from their injuries. We are deeply indebted to these men and women and grateful for the hardships they have endured. We should vote on, and unanimously pass, a resolution that unequivocally communicates this.

However, the Republican majority has presented a resolution that specifically and intentionally prevents unanimous support from this body. The divisive language alleging that the world is a safer place after the Iraqi invasion, is not only a point of great contention, it is a distraction from what should be the sole focus of the resolution: to commend our tireless troops in Iraq. Indeed, the Republican majority has squandered the opportunity to send a message of unwavering support to the American men and women in the field, instead opting to politicize the issue in order to advance its own political agenda.

In good faith, I cannot vote for a resolution that asserts that the world is safer since the U.S. invasion of Iraq when by every account, the world is glaringly even more vulnerable, as partly evidenced by the horrific bombing in Madrid last week. When our country chooses to unilaterally use force before exhausting all diplomatic avenues, we risk alienating ourselves from our allies and emboldening our enemies. Unfortunately, I believe our go-it-alone strategy in Iraq has done just that.

While I cannot vote for this resolution, I am steadfast in my support for the American men and women fighting in Iraq and believe we must support them both by word and action. We must fight to get our troops home quickly and safely while upholding the commitment we have made to the Iraqi people. The best possible way to achieve this is by working with the international community to rebuild Iraq. Additionally, we must ensure that our troops, in the field and once they have returned home, have the benefits they rightfully deserve, including increased access to medical care and deserved increases in the family separation allowance and imminent danger pay.

CHILD NUTRITION IMPROVEMENT AND INTEGRITY ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. SANDER M. LEVIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 24, 2004

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to voice my strong support for the Child Nutrition Reauthorization bill, H.R. 3873, which the House approved yesterday. This reauthorization, which only happens every 5 years, provides Congress the opportunity to examine the program, fix problems, and build on past successes. I am greatly disappointed that this year, my colleagues needed to waste valuable energy protecting existing programs from damaging Administration proposals, rather than using what our schools have learned to move forward.

When we started this debate a year ago, President Bush declared that the problem with the nutrition programs was too many children getting lunch. The President imposed burdensome new eligibility verification rules on our local school districts, despite research from his own Department of Agriculture showing his proposal would likely result in a reduction of eligible children participating in the program. I commend my colleagues on the Committee for ensuring that H.R. 3873 does not harm the School Lunch & Breakfast Program, or take food away from children who need it.

I am also pleased that the bill expands pilot programs such as the Luger Summer Food Pilot Program and the Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Program. In the State of Michigan, 11 percent of our children are considered overweight. Children participating in the Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Program not only ate more fruits and vegetables, but actually purchased less high fat vending machine options, had better attention spans in class, and experienced fewer disciplinary problems. This pilot program has shown that, given the resources, schools can create an environment where healthy snack options can be a reality without